The War in Afghanistan

Excerpted from Lakdawala lecture, New Delhi Online version with notes,
prepared Dec. 30
By Noam Chomsky

The threat of international terrorism is surely severe. The horrendous events of Sept. 11 had perhaps the most devastating instant human toll on record, outside of war. The word "instant" should not be overlooked; regrettably, the crime is far from unusual in the annals of violence that falls short of war. The death toll may easily have doubled or more within a few weeks, as miserable Afghans fled -- to nowhere -- under the threat of bombing, and desperately-needed food supplies were disrupted; and there were credible warnings of much worse to come.

The costs to Afghan civilians can only be guessed, but we do know the projections on which policy decisions and commentary were based, a matter of utmost significance. As a matter of simple logic, it is these projections that provide the grounds for any moral evaluation of planning and commentary, or any judgment of appeals to "just war" arguments; and crucially, for any rational assessment of what may lie ahead.

Even before Sept. 11, the UN estimated that millions were being sustained, barely, by international food aid. On Sept. 16, the national press reported that Washington had "demanded [from Pakistan] the elimination of truck convoys that provide much of the food and other supplies to Afghanistan's civilian population." There was no detectable reaction in the U.S. or Europe to this demand to impose massive starvation; the plain meaning of the words. In subsequent weeks, the world's leading newspaper reported that "The threat of military strikes forced the removal of international aid workers, crippling assistance programs"; refugees reaching Pakistan "after arduous journeys from Afghanistan are describing scenes of desperation and fear at home as the threat of American-led military attacks turns their long-running misery into a potential catastrophe." "The country was on a lifeline," one evacuated aid worker reported, "and we just cut the line." "It's as if a mass grave has been dug behind millions of people," an evacuated emergency officer for Christian Aid informed the press: "We can drag them back from it or push them in. We could be looking at millions of deaths."[1]

The UN World Food Program and others were able to resume some food shipments in early October, but were forced to suspend deliveries and distribution when the bombing began on October 7, resuming them later at a much lower pace. A spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees warned that "We are facing a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions in Afghanistan with 7.5 million short of food and at risk of starvation," while aid agencies leveled "scathing" condemnations of U.S. air drops that are barely concealed "propaganda tools" and may cause more harm than benefit, they warned.[2]

A very careful reader of the national press could discover the estimate by the UN that "7.5 million Afghans will need food over the winter -- 2.5 million more than on Sept. 11," a 50% increase as a result of the threat of bombing, then the actuality.[3] In other words, Western civilization was basing its plans on the assumption that they might lead to the death of several million innocent civilians -- not Taliban, whatever one thinks of the legitimacy of slaughtering Taliban recruits and supporters, but their victims. Meanwhile its leader, on the same day, once again dismissed with contempt offers of negotiation for extradition of the suspected culprit and the request for some credible evidence to substantiate the demands for capitulation. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food pleaded with the U.S. to end the bombing that was putting "the lives of millions of civilians at risk," renewing the appeal of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, who warned of a Rwanda-style catastrophe. Both appeals were rejected, as were those of the major aid and relief agencies. And virtually unreported.[4]

In late September, the UN Food And Agricultural Organization warned that over 7 million people were facing a crisis that could lead to widespread starvation if military action were initiated, with a likely "humanitarian catastrophe" unless aid were immediately resumed and the threat of military action terminated. After bombing began, the FAO advised that it had disrupted planting that provides 80% of the country's grain supplies, so that the effects next year are expected to be even more severe. All ignored.5 These unreported appeals happened to coincide with World Food Day, which was also ignored, along with the charge by the UN Special Rapporteur that the rich and powerful easily have the means, though not the will, to overcome the "silent genocide" of mass starvation in much of the world.6

Let us return briefly to the point of logic: ethical judgments and rational evaluation of what may lie ahead are grounded in the presuppositions of planning and commentary. An entirely separate matter, with no bearing on such judgments, is the accuracy of the projections on which planning and commentary were based. By year's end, there were hopes that unprecedented deliveries of food in December might "dramatically" revise the expectations at the time when planning was undertaken and implemented, and evaluated in commentary: that these actions were likely to drive millions over the edge of starvation.7 Very likely, the facts will never be known, by virtue of a guiding principle of intellectual culture: We must devote enormous energy to exposing the crimes of official enemies, properly counting not only those literally killed but also those who die as a consequence of policy choices; but we must take scrupulous care to avoid this practice in the case of our own crimes, on the rare occasions when they are investigated at all. Observance of the principle is all too well documented. It will be a welcome surprise if the current case turns out differently.

Another elementary point might also be mentioned. The success of violence evidently has no bearing on moral judgment with regard to its goals. In the present case, it seemed clear from the outset that the reigning superpower could easily demolish any Afghan resistance. My own view, for what it is worth, was that à

U.S. campaigns should not be too casually compared to the failed Russian invasion of the 1980s. The Russians were facing a major army of perhaps 100,000 men or more, organized, trained, and heavily armed by the CIA and its associates. The U.S. is facing a ragtag force in a country that has already been virtually destroyed by 20 years of horror, for which we bear no slight share of responsibility. The Taliban forces, such as they are, might quickly collapse except for a small hardened core.8

To my surprise, the dominant judgment -- even after weeks of carpet bombing and resort to virtually every available device short of nuclear weapons ("daisy cutters," cluster bombs, etc.) -- was confidence that the lessons of the Russian failure should be heeded, that airstrikes would be ineffective, and that a ground invasion would be necessary to achieve the U.S. war aims of eliminating bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Removing the Taliban regime was an afterthought. There had been no interest in this before Sept. 11, or even in the month that followed. A week after the bombing began, the President reiterated that U.S. forces "would attack Afghanistan `for as long as it takes' to destroy the Qaeda terrorist network of Osama bin Laden, but he offered to reconsider the military assault on Afghanistan if the country's ruling Taliban would surrender Mr. bin Laden"; "If you cough him up and his people today, then we'll reconsider what we are doing to your country," the President declared: "You still have a second chance."9

When Taliban forces did finally succumb, after astonishing endurance, opinions shifted to triumphalist proclamations and exultation over the justice of our cause, now demonstrated by the success of overwhelming force against defenseless opponents. Without researching the topic, I suppose that Japanese and German commentary was similar after early victories during World War II, and despite obvious dis-analogies, one crucial conclusion carries over to the present case: the victory of arms leaves the issues where they were, though the triumphalist cries of vindication should serve as a warning for those who care about the future.

Returning to the war, the airstrikes quickly turned cities into "ghost towns," the press reported, with electrical power and water supplies destroyed, a form of biological warfare. The UN reported that 70% of the population had fled Kandahar and Herat within two weeks, mostly to the countryside, where in

ordinary times 10-20 people, many of them children, are killed or crippled daily by land mines. Those conditions became much worse as a result of the bombing. UN mine-clearing operations were halted, and unexploded U.S. ordnance, particularly the lethal bomblets scattered by cluster bombs, add to the torture, and are much harder to clear.10

By late October, aid officials estimated that over a million had fled their homes, including 80% of the population of Jalalabad, only a "tiny fraction" able to cross the border, most scattering to the countryside where there was little food or shelter or possibility of delivering aid; appeals from aid agencies to suspend attacks to allow delivery of supplies were again rejected by Blair, ignored by the U.S.11
Months later, hundreds of thousands were reported to be starving in such "forgotten camps" as Maslakh in the North, having fled from "mountainous places to which the World Food Program was giving food aid but stopped because of the bombing and now cannot be reached because the passes are cut off" -- and who knows how many in places that no journalists found -- though supplies were by then available and the primary factor hampering delivery was lack of interest and will.12

By the year's end, long after fighting ended, the occasional report noted that "the delivery of food remains blocked or woefully inadequate," "a system for distributing food is still not in place," and even the main route to Uzbekistan "remains effectively closed to food trucks" over two weeks after it was officially opened with much fanfare; the same was true of the crucial artery from Pakistan to Kandahar, and others were so harassed by armed militias that the World Food Program, now with supplies available, still could not make deliveries, and had no place for storage because "most warehouses were destroyed or looted during the U.S. bombardment."13

A detailed year-end review found that the U.S. war "has returned to power nearly all the same warlords who had misruled the country in the days before the Taliban"; some Afghans see the resulting situation as even "worse than it was before the Taliban came to power."14 The Taliban takeover of most of the country, with little combat, brought to an end a period described by Afghan and international human rights activists as "the blackest in the history of Afghanistan," "the worst time in Afghanistan's history," with vast destruction, mass rapes and other atrocities, and tens of thousands killed.15 These were the years of rule by warlords of the Northern Alliance and other Western favorites, such as the murderous Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, one of the few who has not reclaimed his fiefdom. There are indications that lessons have been learned both in Afghanistan and the world beyond, and that the worst will not recur, as everyone fervently hopes.

Signs were mixed, at year's end. As anticipated, most of the population was greatly relieved to see the end of the Taliban, one of the most retrograde regimes in the world; and relieved that there was no quick return to the atrocities of a decade earlier, as had been feared. The new government in Kabul showed considerably more promise than most had expected. The return of warlordism is a dangerous sign, as was the announcement by the new Justice Minister that the basic structure of sharia law as instituted by the Taliban would remain in force, though "there will be some changes from the time of the Taliban. For example, the Taliban used to hang the victim's body in public for four days. We will only hang the body for a short time, say 15 minutes." Judge Ahamat Ullha Zarif added that some new location would be found for the regular public executions, not the Sports Stadium. "Adulterers, both male and female, would still be stoned to death, Zarif said, `but we will use only small stones'," so that those who confess might be able to run away; others will be "stoned to death," as before.16 The international reaction will doubtless have a significant effect on the balance of conflicting forces.

As the year ended, desperate peasants, mostly women, were returning to the miserable labor of growing opium poppies so that their families can survive, reversing the Taliban ban. The UN had reported in October that poppy production had already "increased threefold in areas controlled by the Northern Alliance," whose warlords "have long been reputed to control much of the processing and smuggling of opium" to Russia and the West, an estimated 75% of the world's heroin. The result of some poor woman's back-breaking labor is that "countless others thousands of miles away from her home in eastern Afghanistan will suffer and die."17

Such consequences, and the devastating legacy of 20 years of brutal war and atrocities, could be alleviated by an appropriate international presence and well-designed programs of aid and reconstruction; were honesty to prevail, they would be called "reparations," at least from Russia and the U.S., which share primary responsibility for the disaster. The issue was addressed in a conference of the UN Development Program, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank in Islamabad in late November. Some guidelines were offered in a World Bank study that focused on Afghanistan's potential role in the development of the energy resources of the region. The study concluded that

Afghanistan has a positive pre-war history of cost recovery for key infrastructure services like electric power, and "green field" investment opportunities in sectors like telecommunications, energy, and oil/gas pipelines. It is extremely important that such services start out on the right track during reconstruction. Options for private investment in infrastructure should be actively pursued.18

One may reasonably ask just whose needs are served by these priorities, and what status they should have in reconstruction from the horrors of the past two decades.

U.S. and British intellectual opinion, across the political spectrum, assured us that only radical extremists can doubt that "this is basically a just war."19 Those who disagree can therefore be dismissed, among them, for example, the 1000 Afghan leaders who met in Peshawar in late October in a U.S.-backed effort to lay the groundwork for a post-Taliban regime led by the exiled King. They bitterly condemned the U.S. war, which is "beating the donkey rather than the rider," one speaker said to unanimous agreement.

The extent to which anti-Taliban Afghan opinion was ignored is rather striking -- and not at all unusual; during the Gulf war, for example, Iraqi dissidents were excluded from press and journals, apart from "alternative media," though they were readily accessible. Without eliciting comment, Washington maintained its long-standing official refusal to have any dealings with the Iraqi opposition even well after the war ended.20 In the present case, Afghan opinion is not as easily assessed, but the task would not have been impossible, and the issue is of such evident significance that it merits at least a few comments.

We might begin with the gathering of Afghan leaders in Peshawar, some exiles, some who trekked across the border from within Afghanistan, all committed to overthrowing the Taliban regime. It was "a rare display of unity among tribal elders, Islamic scholars, fractious politicians, and former guerrilla commanders," the *New York Times* reported. They unanimously "urged the U.S. to stop the air raids," appealed to the international media to call for an end to the "bombing of innocent people," and "demanded an end to the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan." They urged that other means be adopted to overthrow the hated Taliban regime, a goal they believed could be achieved without slaughter and destruction.21

Reported, but dismissed without further comment.

A similar message was conveyed by Afghan opposition leader Abdul Haq, who condemned the air attacks as a "terrible mistake."22 Highly regarded in Washington, Abdul Haq was considered to be "perhaps the most important leader of anti-Taliban opposition among Afghans of Pashtun nationality based in Pakistan."23 His advice was to "avoid bloodshed as much as possible"; instead of bombing, "we should undermine the central leadership, which is a very small and closed group and which is also the only thing which holds them all together. If they are destroyed, every Taliban fighter will pick up his gun and his blanket and disappear back home, and that will be the end of the Taliban," an assessment that seems rather plausible in the light of subsequent events.

Several weeks later, Abdul Haq entered Afghanistan, apparently without U.S. support, and was captured and killed. As he was undertaking this mission "to create a revolt within the Taliban," he criticized the U.S. for refusing to aid him and others in such endeavors, and condemned the bombing as "a big setback for these efforts." He reported contacts with second-level Taliban commanders and ex-Mujahidin tribal elders, and discussed how further efforts could proceed, calling on the U.S. to assist them with funding and other support instead of undermining them with bombs.

The U.S., Abdul Haq said,is trying to show its muscle, score a victory and scare everyone in the world. They don't care about the suffering of the Afghans or how many people we will lose. And we don't like that. Because Afghans are now being made to suffer for these Arab fanatics, but we all know who brought these Arabs to Afghanistan in the 1980s, armed them and gave them a base. It was the Americans and the

CIA. And the Americans who did this all got medals and good careers, while all these years Afghans suffered from these Arabs and their allies. Now, when America is attacked, instead of punishing the Americans who did this, it punishes the Afghans.

We can also look elsewhere for enlightenment about Afghan opinions. A beneficial consequence of the latest Afghan war is that it elicited some belated concern about the fate of women in Afghanistan, even reaching the First Lady. Perhaps it will be followed some day by concern for the plight of women elsewhere in Central and South Asia, which, unfortunately, is often not very different from life under the Taliban, including the most vibrant democracies.24 Of course, no sane person advocates foreign military intervention to rectify these and other injustices. The problems are severe, but should be dealt with from within, with assistance from outsiders if it is constructive and honest.

Since the harsh treatment of women in Afghanistan has at last gained some well-deserved attention, one might expect that attitudes of Afghan women towards policy options should be a primary concern. A natural starting point for an inquiry is Afghanistan's "oldest political and humanitarian organisation," RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan), which has been "foremost in the struggle" for women's rights since its formation in 1977.25 RAWA's leader was assassinated by Afghan collaborators with the Russians in 1987, but they continued their work within Afghanistan at risk of death, and in exile nearby.

RAWA has been quite outspoken. Thus, a week after the bombing began, RAWA issued a public statement entitled: "Taliban should be overthrown by the uprising of Afghan nation."26 It continued as follows:
Again, due to the treason of fundamentalist hangmen, our people have been caught in the claws of the monster of a vast war and destruction. America, by forming an international coalition against Osama and his Taliban-collaborators and in retaliation for the 11th September terrorist attacks, has launched a vast aggression on our country... what we have witnessed for the past seven days leaves no doubt that this invasion will shed the blood of numerous women, men, children, young and old of our country.
The statement called for "the eradication of the plague of Taliban and Al Qieda" by "an overall uprising" of the Afghan people themselves, which alone "can prevent the repetition and recurrence of the catastrophe that has befallen our country...."

In another declaration on November 25, at a demonstration of women's organizations in Islamabad on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, RAWA condemned the U.S./Russian-backed Northern Alliance for a "record of human rights violations as bad as that of the Taliban's," and called on the UN to "help Afghanistan, not the Northern Alliance." RAWA issued similar warnings at the national conference of the All India Democratic Women's Association on the same days.27
Also ignored.

One might note that this is hardly the first time that the concerns of advocates of women's rights in Afghanistan have been dismissed. Thus, in 1988 the UNDP senior adviser on women's rights in Afghanistan warned that the "great advances" in women's rights she had witnessed there were being imperilled by the "ascendant fundamentalism" of the U.S.-backed radical Islamists. Her report was submitted to the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, but not published; and her account of how the U.S. "contributed handsomely to the suffering of Afghan women" remains unknown.28

Perhaps it is right to ignore Afghans who have been struggling for freedom and women's rights for many years, and to assign responsibility for their country's future to foreigners whose record in this regard is less than distinguished. Perhaps, but it does not seem entirely obvious.

The issue of "just war" should not be confused with a wholly different question: Should the perpetrators of the atrocities of Sept. 11 be punished for their crimes -- "crimes against humanity," as they were called by Robert Fisk, Mary Robinson, and others. On this there is virtually unanimous agreement -- though, notoriously, the principles do not extend to the agents of even far worse crimes who are protected by power and wealth. The question is how to proceed.

The approach favored by Afghans who were ignored had considerable support in much of the world. Many in the South would surely have endorsed the recommendations of the UN representative of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association: "providing the Taliban with evidence (as it has requested) that links bin Laden to the September 11 attacks, employing diplomatic pressures to extradite him, and prosecuting terrorists through international tribunals," and generally adhering to international law, following precedents that exist even in much more severe cases of international terrorism. Adherence to international law had scattered support in the West as well, including the preeminent Anglo-American military historian Michael Howard, who delivered a "scathing attack" on the bombardment, calling instead for an international "police operation" and international court rather than "trying to eradicate cancer cells with a blow torch."29

Washington's refusal to call for extradition of the suspected criminals, or to provide the evidence that was requested, was entirely open, and generally approved. Its own refusal to extradite criminals remains effectively secret, however.30 There has been debate over whether U.S. military actions in Afghanistan were authorized under ambiguous Security Council resolutions, but it avoids the central issue: Washington plainly did not want Security Council authorization,31 which it surely could have obtained, clearly and unambiguously. Since it lost its virtual monopoly over UN decisions, the U.S. has been far in the lead in vetoes, Britain second, France a distant third, but none of these powers would have opposed a U.S.-sponsored resolution. Nor would Russia or China, eager to gain U.S. authorization for their own atrocities and repression (in Chechnya and western China, particularly). But Washington insisted on not obtaining Security Council authorization, which would entail that there is some higher authority to which it should defer. Systems of power resist that principle if they are strong enough to do so. There is even a name for that stance in the literature of diplomacy and international affairs scholarship: establishing "credibility," a justification commonly offered for the threat or use of force. While understandable, and conventional, that stance also has lessons concerning the likely future, even more so because of the elite support that it receives, openly or indirectly.

....

FOOTNOTES

1. John Burns "Pakistan's Antiterror Support Avoids Vow Of Military Aid," *NYT*, Sept. 16; "U.S. Embassy in Kabul Is Destroyed By Protestors, *NYT*, Sept. 27. Douglas Frantz, "Fear and Misery for Afghan Refugees," *NYT*, Sept. 30; John Sifton, "Temporal Vertigo," *NYT Magazine*, Sept. 30. Christian Aid officer Dominic Nutt, cited in Stephen Morris and Felicity Lawrence, "Afghanistan Facing Humanitarian Disaster," *Guardian*, Sept. 19, 2001. For further quotes, and sources not cited here, see my *9-11* (New York: Seven Stories, 2001) return

2. UNHCR, Michelle Nichols and Paul Gallagher, "Bread Harder to Deliver than Bombs," *The Scotsman*, Oct. 8. Air drops, Mark Nicolson, "UN concern as airstrikes bring relief effort to halt" and Michela Wrong, "Relief workers hit at linking of food drops with air raids," *Financial Times*, Oct. 9; "Scepticism grows over US food airdrops," *FT*, Oct. 10; "Agency rejects US and UK donations as 'propaganda'," *South China Morning Post*, Oct. 11 (referring to Medecins sans Frontieres); "US warned of catastrophe in wake of air assault," *FT*, Oct. 12; "US military food drops a 'catastrophe' - UN official", AFP, Oct. 15, citing Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food; "Red Cross critical of US raid mistakes, aid airdrops," AFP, Oct. 18, 2001. return

3. Elisabeth Bumiller and Elizabeth Becker, "Bush Voices Pride in Aid, but Groups List Hurdles," *NYT*, Oct. 17, 2001. return

4. A data-base search by David Peterson found that the appeal of the UN Special Rapporteur was not reported, and that Robinson's received six sentences in the U.S. press, one peripherally in the *NYT*, five in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, three of which were devoted to the rejection of her appeal; none mentioned the substance of her warning. That is fairly typical. return

5. "UN food agency warns of mass starvation in Afghanistan," AFP, Sept. 28; Edith Lederer, "U.S. bombing disrupting planting which provides 80% of annual grain harvest," AP, Oct. 18, 2001. Andrew Revkin, "Afghan Drought Inflicts Its Own Misery," *NYT*, Dec. 16, 2001, citing U.S. Department of Agriculture, with no mention of bombing. return

6. "Global hunger a 'silent genocide' - UN rights expert" (Jean Ziegler), AFP, Oct. 15, 2001. return

7. Marc Kaufman, "Battling Hunger," *Washington Post-Boston Globe*, Dec. 31, 2001. return

8. Interview of Sept. 30, reprinted in *9-11*. return

9. Patrick Tyler and Elisabeth Bumiller, "`Just Bring Him In'," *NYT*, Oct. 12; Jonathan Steele, "Fighting the Wrong War," *Guardian*, Dec. 11, 2001, tracing the "war aim" of removing the Taliban regime to Tony

Blair's first clear formulation of it on Oct. 30. On predictions, given the consensus, citation is superfluous. For a nuanced assessment, with somewhat similar conclusions, see Milton Bearden, "Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires," *Foreign Affairs*, Nov./Dec. 2001; Bearden was CIA station chief in Pakistan from 1986 to 1989, responsible for CIA covert action programs in Afghanistan. return

10. John Donnelly, "Waves of Afghans fleeing 2 cities," *BG*, Oct.. 20; Michael Kranish and Colin Nickerson, "Pentagon gives a wary assessment," *BG*, Oct. 25; Laura King, "Airstrikes forge a ghost town," *BG*, Oct. 24; Indira Lakshmanan, "Days of travail, nights of fear," *BG*, Oct. 11; Colin Nickerson, "Mines make Afghanistan a landscape of danger," *BG*, Oct. 23, 2001. return

11. "Supplies of food `not getting through to refugees'," *FT*, Oct. 22; Edward Luce, "Aid agencies troubled as Afghans disperse," *FT*, Oct. 23; Elizabeth Becker, "U.N. Plans Relief Airlifts," *NYT*, Oct. 23; also an upbeat report by Jane Perlez, blaming the Taliban, same day. Aid agencies reported that "Taliban officials were helping British food and medical aid reach tens of thousands of Afghan refugees in desperate condition"; Mark Nicholson, Michela Wrong, Guy Dinmore, "UN warns of threat to relief in hostile areas," *FT*, Oct. 11. On condemnation by aid agencies of "inaccurate propaganda" by the U.S.-British "spin-machine" seeking to deflect responsibility for the "expected humanitarian crisis" to the Taliban, see Jo Dillon, *Independent*, Dec. 9, 2001. return

12. Christina Lamb, *Daily Telegraph*, Dec. 9, who reports scenes more "harrowing" than anything in her memory, after having "seen death and misery in refugee camps in many parts of Asia and Africa." return

13. Carlotta Gall and Elizabeth Becker, "As Refugees Suffer, Supplies Sit Unused Near Afghan Border," *NYT*, Dec. 6; David Rohde, "`Grandchildren and Ladies' Become Casualties," *NYT*, Dec. 12, noting that "regular aid shipments have been suspended since bombing began and the area is desperately short of food, medicine and irrigation equipment," a rare acknowledgment in the national press. Carlotta Gall, "As Afghans Return Home, Need for Food Intensifies," *NYT*, Dec. 26; David Filipov, "Warlords, bandits rule most terrain," *BG*, Dec. 17; Jeremy Page, Reuters, "Refugees' Return," *BG*, Dec. 27, 2001. On the "mass nervous breakdown" caused by "relentless bombing" with devastating weapons, as reported by fleeing refugees, see Peter Cheney, "U.S. attacks on Taliban stronghold `a nightmare'," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Dec. 4, 2001. And for graphic and expert accounts throughout, see particularly the outstanding reporting of Robert Fisk in the London *Independent*. return

14. Norimitsu Onishi, "Afghan Warlords and Bandits Are Back in Business," *NYT*, Dec. 28, 2001. return

15. Tahmeena Faryal, spokesperson for Afghanistan's leading human rights organization, RAWA (see below), interview with Sonali Kalhatkar of the Afghan Women's Mission, reprinted in *Z magazine*, Jan. 2002. Joost Hiltermann, Middle East specialist for Human Rights Watch, cited by Charles Sennott, "A dark side to the Northern Alliance," *BG*, Oct. 6, 2001. return

16. "Afghanistan to apply sharia law with discretion: minister," AFP, Kabul, Dec. 27. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Dec. 28, 2001. return

17. David Filipov, "As cash crop, poppies flourish anew," *BG*, Dec. 27, 2001. return

18. Nadeem Malik, "Afghan reconstruction to centre on oil and gas pipelines," *News* (Islamabad), Nov. 27, 2001. return

19. Robert Kuttner, editor, *American Prospect*, Nov. 5, 2001; a conclusion scarcely questioned across a broad spectrum, though the same issue of the journal, in a rare and important departure from the norm, reports significant disagreement; see note 26. return

20. For review, see my *Deterring Democracy* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1992, 2nd edition), "Afterword." return

21. Barry Bearak, "Leaders of the Old Afghanistan Prepare for the New," *NYT*, Oct. 25. John Thornhill and Farhan Bokhari, "Traditional leaders call for peace jihad," *FT*, Oct. 25; "Afghan peace assembly call," *FT*, Oct. 26. John Burns, "Afghan Gathering in Pakistan Backs Future Role for King," *NYT*, Oct. 26; Indira Laskhmanan, "1,000 Afghan leaders discuss a new regime," *BG*, Oct. 25, 26, 2001. return

22. Barry Bearak, *NYT*, Oct. 27, 2001. return

23. Anatol Lieven, "Voices from the Region: Interview with Commander Abdul Haq," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, posted Oct. 15. See Lieven, *Guardian*, Nov. 2, 2001. Quotes below from this interview. return

24. See, e.g., Jean Dreze and Haris Gazdar, "Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia," in Dreze and Amartya Sen, eds., *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives* (Delhi: Oxford, 1996). return

25. Carola Hoyos and Victor Mallet, "Women look to UN in rights fight," *FT*, Dec. 21; Rasil Basu, "The Rape of Afghanistan," *Asian Age*, Dec. 3, 2001. A leading figure in UN programs for women's

advancement since 1975, Basu was UNDP senior advisor to the Afghan government for women's development in 1986-88. return

26. Oct. 11, 2001, <http://www.rawa.org/>. For a rare mention of RAWA's "antimilitary stance," see Noy Thrupkaew, "Behind the Burqa," *American Prospect*, Nov. 5, 2001. Also Faryal, *op. cit.* return

27. Mohammad Shezad, "Women rally demands end to violence, victimisation," *News* (Islamabad), Nov. 27; N Ramachandra Rao, "For Women, Northern Alliance No Better," *Times of India*, Nov. 26; "RAWA representative against installing Northern Alliance," Press Trust of India, Nov. 25, 2001. return

28. Basu, *op. cit.* The report was also rejected by the feminist journal *Ms*. return

29. Thrupkaew, *op. cit.* Howard, cited by Tania Branigan, *Guardian*, Oct. 31, 2001. See also William Pfaff, Oct. 31; *New York Review*, Nov. 29, 2001. There were similar calls from the Vatican, the Latin American Council of Churches (see *LADOC*, Peru, Nov. 2001), and many others. return

30. Current cases involve Haiti and Costa Rica, for crimes in which the U.S. is directly implicated. Costa Rica's attempt to deal with these crimes was punished by withholding aid. Haiti is now subject to a harsh U.S. embargo for alleged election irregularities, with severe effects on the miserable population in the poorest country in the hemisphere (and incidentally, the prime target of U.S. intervention in the 20th century, military and economic, not to speak of a shameful earlier history). See my *9-11* (Haiti), and on Costa Rica, *Letters from Lexington* (Monroe ME: Common Courage, 1993, chap. 16); *Deterring Democracy* (chap. 4); *Year 501* (Boston: South End, 1993, chap. 7). On the "devastating" effects of the embargo, see Paul Farmer, Dec. 2001 interview, *Haiti Bulletin* (Ross Robinson & Associates). A prominent international medical authority and specialist on Haiti, Farmer has been running a clinic in rural Haiti for 20 years. These matters are virtually unknown in the U.S. return

31. The fact was noted. See, e.g., Elaine Sciolino and Steven Lee Myers, "Bush Says 'Time Is Running Out'; U.S. Plans To Act Largely Alone," *NYT*, Oct. 7, 2001: "A sign of Washington's insistence that its hands not be tied was its rejection of United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan's entreaties that any American military action be subject to Security Council approval, administration officials said." For judicious commentary on the legal issues, see *ASIL Insights* (American Society of International Law), 10/2/2001. return